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Forest Service News

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

V-12
3-27-85

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FOREST SERVICE TO REDUCE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

The Forest Service will reduce the number of fulltime employees in the Pacific Northwest Region (Oregon and Washington) by 700 to 900 people before December 30, according to Regional Forester Jeff M. Sirmon.

"We anticipate a significant reduction in workload over the next five years as a result of a large volume of timber being returned to the government under the 'Timber Contract Modification Act' (buy-back) of 1984," Sirmon said.

"Although we are making these reductions in advance of definite information on the actual timber volume to be returned to the Forest Service, current indications are that the turn back volume will be significant.

The legislation requires that the returned volume be reoffered in an orderly way but on a priority basis over new timber sales. Since many of these sales will require only moderate modification prior to resale, there is less work to do. Less work requires less funding and, subsequently, fewer people.

Sirmon points out that approximately 60 percent of the workforce losses are attributed to the reduced workload resulting from timber "buy-back". The remaining losses are from associated program and budget reductions. These reductions do not reflect any additional reductions that may result from the
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Forest Service/BLM Interchange or a variety of streamlining programs that may be implemented in various programs over the next few years.

"This is a difficult, but necessary, task" Sirmon added. "We will do everything possible to accommodate the needs of our employees through early retirements and job placement elsewhere."

Peak Forest Service employment in the Pacific Northwest was in 1975 when the agency had nearly 9,000 people employed full time. That number is now about 7,000.

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